



SEQUOIA & KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

& SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST/GIANT SEQUOIA NATIONAL MONUMENT

WINTER GUIDE 2010-11



Park Activities • page 3
Road Limits / Safety / Finding Gasoline • page 5
Highlights in Sequoia Park • page 6
Highlights in Kings Canyon & USFS • page 7

page 8 • Facilities & Programs in Sequoia
page 9 • Facilities & Programs in Kings Canyon & USFS
page 10 • Camping & Lodging / Bears & Your Food
page 12 • Traffic Delays / Park Map



Winter welcome

Many people see the cold winter face of these parks and shiver at the thought of a visit. Those who come anyway figure out the secret: Winter welcomes us with some of the greatest beauty, mystery, tranquility, challenge, and just plain fun these parks can offer.

Enjoying the parks in winter may not be as easy as a summer visit: You may need to “chain up.” In fact, if you are in the park now and want to see sequoias but don't have tire chains in the car, check the weather forecast and think again. The suddenness and unpredictability of Sierran weather, plus genuine concern for your safety, make the rangers err on the side of caution when deciding to require chains. But if you've got chains, layers of warm clothes, and you're willing to take the roads slowly, then the delights of winter await you!

If there's enough snow and you enjoy social fun, head to one of the bustling snowplay areas (see pages 8 and 9). Take your fun seriously, though, and play safe. People get hurt snowplaying every year. Some of the injuries are devastating; don't let one happen to you! Rangers may close all or part of the snowplay hills if they get extremely icy, but only *you* can prevent accidents.

Want to be active but not in a crowd? When the snow is deep enough, snowshoe or cross-country ski into the wintry heart of a sequoia grove; it's like nothing else you've ever tried. Whether you find misty fog or bright sunshine, the peace and clean, clear beauty



Snow highlights the sequoias' red bark and black fire scars.
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will refresh your spirit while your legs get pleasantly tired. Not enough snow? Take a hike!

Stay safe on the trails, too. Carry a map and tell someone where you are going. Follow a road that's closed to vehicles, or learn how to spot and follow the ski-trail signs on the trees. Get back before winter's early sunset.

Didn't bring a sled, snowshoes, or skis? You can rent or buy them at Grant Grove Market and Wuksachi Lodge.

Visitor-center staff can help you make sure you have what you need for your particular winter adventure. Step into the centers at Grant Grove or Lodgepole (Giant Forest Museum is closed this winter) and check out the exhibits while you're there. When you head outside again, you'll know and appreciate the natural scene around you even more.

If you've had enough of cold, the snow-free foothills are in their glory now. Green grass coats the hills that were bone dry and brown just a few

months ago. Flowers pop up by late January. Birds not seen here in summer flash through oak and chaparral. Slanted and soft, winter sunlight highlights the landscape's details. Take advantage of the lower-elevation trails now; they'll be very hot by summer!

So welcome to winter in the Sierra. We're glad you didn't let the cold keep you away. Just remain flexible and let the weather call the shots; winter fun unmarred by accidents make the best memories.